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Improving the lives of Iowa's women & girls

June 27, 2019

Council on Human Services
Iowa Department of Human Services
Hoover State Building, 312 E. Walnut
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Council Members,

The Iowa Women's Foundation (IWF) appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) update to the SFY 2021 budget recommendations and legislative package. The Iowa Women's Foundation believes Iowa has an affordable quality child care crisis!

In many Iowa communities, child care is either unaffordable, inaccessible or nonexistent. Working parents miss work, drop shifts are less engaged on the job, switch employers, or leave the workforce altogether. Three-quarters of Iowa families with children under the age of six have all available parents working outside of the home, yet almost a quarter of Iowans live in an area undersupplied with licensed or registered child care options. Iowa has lost 42% of our child care providers in the last 5 years.

This crisis is only going to get worse if we do not take action. The problem is escalating. It needs to be addressed for the long-term health of families, businesses and communities across our state. But we cannot rely on a single organization or a single solution to fix it. Collaboration is key!

Today, the Iowa Women's Foundation (IWF) and partner organizations started the **Building Community Child Care Solutions Collaborative**. Through our shared work, 22 communities across Iowa are now exploring innovative ways to exchange ideas among business and community leaders, employees and organizations to promote child care investments—both for the short and long term.

The collaborative efforts are based on community-led change. Through listening and learning, educating and engaging, the collaboration ultimately supports successful families, a steady Iowa workforce and a stronger economy. The collaborative has already brought people together from all corners of the state to learn from each other and share their success stories—saving time, money and energy so communities can focus on real solutions.

We are asking DHS to join this collaborative effort and increase funding to increase the availability of quality affordable child care across Iowa. Specifically, IWF recommends additional CCDF funds to support start-up funding to promote the expansion of new service options. In addition, IWF recommends that both the T.E.A.C.H. and WAGES programs be supported state-wide, increasing the providers (including Center Directors) salary and decreasing the number leaving the industry.



Finally, we are asking that you increase Child Care Assistance (CCA) rates so that child care centers can increase compensation to the providers.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input on your SFY 2021 budget recommendations and legislative package. We look forward to working together to ensure an end to the child care crisis in Iowa.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dawn Oliver Wiand'.

Dawn Oliver Wiand
Executive Director